LABOR

I. "Free Labor

N
464 Information on labor conditions in the Northwest is very scanty. However, there are indications that the Communists have faced a very serious problem of labor shortage in that N
[162] area. To begin with, the Northwest is a very sparsely populated area. It embraces about one third of China's territory, but its population is only about six percent of the national total. If any large scale reconstruction works are to be effected, N
[871] it seems to be necessary to use outside labor supplies. Moreover, educational standards in the Northwest have been relatively N
464 low. Consequently, the quality of native labor is also a problem.

To overcome these difficulties, the Communists have adopted
*668 several methods. One is to encourage or force skilled and
177 semi-skilled labor in other parts of the country to work in the
167 Northwest. For instance, the communication department of
[466] Sinkiang in May, 1955, absorbed some 409 automobile drivers S
[464] and mechanics from among the demobilized servicemen in
066] Shantung and Honan for reconstruction work in the border regions. In March, 1955, 200 cadres of Hui nationality of the People's Liberation Army Railway Corps have been transfered to work in the Hui-nationality areas in Kansu and Chinghai. Most of these cadres have passed through the Anti-Japanese "War of Liberation," land reform and Anti-U.S. and Aid-Korea campaigns. Of these ninety percent are party members or members of the Communist Youth League.

In late 1954, four thousand skilled building workers and technicians from other cities have signed up for work in Sian. They began to arrive from Shanghai, Wuhan, Canton and other places in early 1955, and they were warmly welcomed by the local authorities. All this shows that outside labor has played a very important part in the economic reconstruction in the Northwest (See also section Population).

II. Army Labor

S
464 Another method is to use the army as a labor force. This
701 has been particularly important in Sinkiang, in which the
708 People's Liberation Army have participated in many reconstruction
668 projects. To take 1955 as an example, they were engaged in
177 the following tasks:

A March 24, 1955, despatch reports: "The People's Liberation Army farming units in Sinkiang have started their afforestation program in the south of this province. This year they plan to plant trees on 1,200 hectares, mostly shelter belts to protect reclaimed farmland."

S
N
464
466

Forced labor in the strict sense, or "corrective" labor, has however also been amply used. Conscript labor solved several of the problems connected with the labor situation in the Northwest. "Free" or induced labor had to be given certain incentives, such as higher wages and better living conditions in order to overcome non-economic barriers to labor mibility, such as language barriers, differences of customs and living standards, differences of climate, etc. For skilled and semi-skilled labor these incentives might prove a worthwhile investment; for unskilled labor, however, a cheaper labor supply was desirable. Conscript labor would also overcome the problem of labor discipline, which is prone to be particularly serious among laborers working far from home. Specifically conscript labor could be employed at a level of subsistence far below the minimum to be paid to a recruited or induced labor force; it could be employed in dangerous work without the necessity of using costly safeguards against accidents; and it had the advantage of perfect mobility and could be moved around without regard to family and other social ties. In the following, some reports, mostly collected in summer 1955 among Turkestani refugees are given to throw some light on the extent of conscript labor used in the Northwest.

S
464
466
697
668
199
648

From a refugee in a colony in Yugoslavia, called Yengi Khotan "New Khotan":

In 1950 at an open People's court session in Cherchen, former Kuomintang officials, influential merchants and landowners were tried, sentenced and dispossessed of their property. They were transported to Charklik (Chin.: Cho-chiang) from where they proceeded in a southeastern direction where a new auto highway was being constructed. The prisoners were formed into working units which were led by Soviet soldiers of the Seventh Regiment. Halim estimates that at least six to ten thousand prisoners were working between Charklik and Timurlik. Each three hundred men was headed by a Russian corporal or sergeant. He said that the real masters of the area were the Russians, and he repeatedly emphasized that the latter treated even the Chinese Communist officials with no respect. Furthermore, he saw several mining projects in this area, especially gold mines. When he was transferred to the area of Tash-Kurghan (Turk.: Stone tomb) in 1953, he managed to flee to the Wakhan area of Afghanistan.

S
[316]

S
464
466
697
499
428
668
199

Reports, published in Turk-i-stan, Arabian edition, March 1955, Rawalpindi, Pakistan, give a limited account of the railway construction between Turfan and Hami. It states that since May, 1953, about 80,000 prisoners have worked there. The main body of prisoners consisted of Chinese, but there were also thousands of New-Uighurs, Kazakhs, Mongols and

000by the Soviet Bloc, particularly Russia.

*668 499 464 466 *175 Manpower on railway construction is another interesting point. According to Dr. Ling Hung-hsün's (veteran engineer of Free China) personal survey of the present Lanchou Alma Ata line in 1943, population along the whole line within the border of Sinkiang did not exceed 600,000; the part in Kansu was also thinly populated. In view of the shortage of laborers, especially skilled workers, among the local population, it would be necessary for the Chinese Communists to use forced labor from other areas to work in this remote region. Although no exact information concerning this is available, as reported, out of a total of 23.25 million, about 250,000 persons were forced to work in transportation projects as a whole in 1955. (Wu, Yuan-li, An Economic Survey of Communist China, p. 323.) The armed forces were also employed [701] for this purpose. For example, a unit of the First Field Army contracted with the Communist Government in the spring of 1950 for the construction of the entire T'ien-shui-Lanchou Railway. According to the news reporter, Robert Guillain, the manpower resources in building the Lanchou-Sinkiang Railway consisted of the Northwest Chinese troops (as well as others) who had first "volunteered" to fight in Korea, and after being demobilized in Lanchou had again "volunteered" to remain as civilian workers. ("I Saw Communist China" The Saturday Evening Post, June 2, [648] 1956, p. 114.) Russian experts, of course, were invited to supervise the railway construction.

B. Highways

491 499 *668 *175 In addition to the railway construction which is carried out at full speed in the Northwest, highway building and renovating were greatly developed. There is not much information available concerning new highway construction in Shensi province. The only report available said that during 1954 over 210 kilometers of highway were repaired and 115 kilometers of new highways added, in addition to the renovation of the Han-chung-Pai-ho Highway.

In Kansu, highways radiate from Lanchou towards Chinghai, Sinkiang, Inner Mongolia, Shensi and Szechwan. The most important highways built in 1953 were the Lanchou-Hsia-ho-A-pa (in Szechwan), Hsia-ho-Min-hsien and T'ien-shui-Chang-chia-chuan lines with a total of 630 kilometers. In 1955, over 1000 kilometers of highways were either constructed or repaired in Kansu. One from Lanchou led to the Ching-tai coal field, one ran from Lanchou to the Liu-chia Gorge where the gigantic hydro-electric resources along the Yellow River are located, and another ran from Shan-tan to the Shantan coal area. The 426 kilometer section between Tun-huang of Kansu to Shuerhkuli in Sinkiang was being renovated.

2: Teichman G-5 (1919) 1921 AF13 Northwest China AF13

through which the path descends to reach the township of Ch'angning Chen, winding to and fro to avoid the rifts, the heads of ravines and valleys breaking away south and south-east.

The harvest time on these immense wheat prairies which was now approaching is a period of intense activity. The crops are of course gathered entirely by hand, and large numbers of labourers from Kansu, groups of whom we were constantly meeting, come down to assist; after the harvest is over in the Wei valley plains they work back across the plateau of Western Shensi to their native highlands, harvesting as they go. In good years there must be a large surplus of wheat in Shensi and Kansu available for export; but in the absence of waterways and railways the means of communication are so bad that it would be impossible to move the harvests to any distance.

From Ch'angning the path runs in a northerly direction across the plateau, winding about to avoid the impassable rifts, for about 20 li, where it reaches the Ching River, flowing in a deep narrow cañon some 800 feet deep. There is a steep descent into this gorge, and the Ching River, an unfordable torrent of liquid mud, is crossed by a ferry. This cañon exposes clearly the depth of the loess covering, some five or six hundred feet, the stream having carved itself a bed still deeper down in the underlying rock. The track climbs out of the gorge to the top of the plateau a similar height on the further side, and then runs across the undulating uplands for 15 li to the village of Kao Ts'un in the district of Pin Chou, 90 li from Yungshou. This is a tiring march, including the passage of the Ching Ho, for on the small roads of Northern Shensi the li are apt to be very long.

From Kao Ts'un the track continues N.E. for another 30 li to the village of T'u Ch'iao (4400 feet), in the district of Sanshui, now called Hsünyi Hsien, the highest and most northerly point on the plateau reached between Yungshou and Ch'unhua, whence it runs S.E., descending gradually with the slope of the land, for 45 li, to the large village of T'ungshen Kou. So far the trail by keeping to the north had avoided the crevasses in the loess, but as soon as one turned S.E. they began to be met. Thus between T'u Ch'iao and T'ungshen Kou three streamlets flowing in